

MEDIASCAN TRANSCRIPT
ABC NIGHTLINE
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Tuesday

(NOTE: This program joined in progress because of extended local programming.)

GREENFIELD:Sen. *Miller Tidings criticized Sen. Joe McCarthy in 1950, his photo was airbrushed together with a picture of a Communist Party leader to make them appear to be talking together, and the 1964 Johnson-Goldwater race was filled with heavy artillery. UNIDENTIFIED ANNOUNCER: Three, two, one, zero. 1964 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN COMMERCIAL: These are the stakes: to make a world in which all of God's children can live.

GREENFIELD: For most of our political history, these tactics were seen as part of the game. That attitude changed here, after the 1972 Watergate break-in, when wiretaps gave dirty tricks a bad name. Donald Segretti, a low-level Nixon re-election aide, served a short jail term for some of the tricks he helped engineer against the Muskie campaign--tricks like writing a phony letter on Muskie stationery accusing rival presidential candidates of sexual improprieties. Other campaign tactics are also clearly illegal: bugging, forging campaign literature, misrepresenting yourself as a worker in a campaign, and the Federal Election Commission now closely monitors campaign spending. But with other tactics, the line blurs. Robert Strauss, former Democratic national chairman... STRAUSS: People in other camps from time to time give, give information. After all, it is very difficult to keep any kind of secret. I think there is a considerable difference, I would say, between that kind of activity and an activity of, breaking-and-entering activity to get information or to get materials, or theft of materials.

GREENFIELD: Some politicians have drawn sharp ethical lines even in the midst of campaigns. An aide to President Truman once sent back, unopened, a Republican campaign strategy document accidentally left at the White House. In 1976, the campaign of Mo Udall did the same when it was given confidential material belonging to rival Jimmy Carter. Martin Nolan has covered politics for more than 20 years. NOLAN (Boston Globe): Dirty tricks are not really the American way of life. I don't think it's fair to say that everyone does it. STRAUSS: And I think this system, this notion of preaching to the American people, or some of the people that have tried to, that have been caught in something or involved in something of saying, 'everyone does it,' is just wrong, Republicans don't do it or Democrats. There's a standard of morality and a standard of decency in politics.

GREENFIELD: Of course, politicians would love to be revered the way George Washington was for his honor and his integrity, but in the immortal words of Mr. Dooley, 'Politics ain't beanbag. It's about power and wealth and careers.' And sometimes the will to win these prizes is a lot stronger than the will to abide by the rules of fair play. Besides, when George Washington was running for president, nobody was running against him. Jeff Greenfield for Nightline, in Washington.

KOPPEL: With us now live from WTSP in Tampa-St. Petersburg is Charles Colson, former White House counsel to President Nixon. Mr. Colson served seven months in prison for obstruction of justice in connection with the Watergate scandal. So, I suppose it is not unfair to point out that in a previous incarnation you have some expertise in the subject of, well, political dirty tricks, do you think? What does your nose tell you about this one? COLSON: Well, I don't know very much about it, Ted, except what I've

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